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The Law and Family –Work Balance of Married Employees in Universities in Rivers State

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Abstract

The study examines the law and family-work balance of married employees in universities in Rivers State. Balancing family and work responsibilities results to high level of efficiency and effectiveness at work and at home. Two research questions and two hypotheses guided the study. The descriptive survey design was used in the study. The population of the study consisted of married employees that were drawn from the three universities in Rivers State (University of Port Harcourt, Rivers State University, and Ignatius Ajuru University). The researchers sampled 383 respondents for data collection using Taro Yamen's sample size technique, although 345 were valid for the study. Structured questionnaire titled "Law and family-work balance of married employees Questionnaire (LFWBMEQ)" was the instrument for data collection. The research questions were analyzed using descriptive statistics of mean and standard deviation, while the hypotheses were tested using z-test (inferential statistics). Results revealed that the state of family-work balance of married employees in universities is one in which family obligations do not affect the job to be done in the universities although family-related stress tend to affect job flexibility in terms of necessary leaves like casual leave, paternity leave, paid time off policy, reduced working hours of nursing mothers within a one year span and provision for handling medical bills of employees by employers in the university should be encouraged. Based on the findings of the study, the researchers recommended that universities should communicate effectively with its employees on family-work practices, government should be involved, paternity leave should be introduced, and the need to know if an employee's resignation was as a result of imbalance of family-work issues

Keywords: Law; family-work balance; married employees.

Introduction

The recent economic recession pressure has led both husbands and wives in most homes to search for jobs in order to make ends meet. This is contrary to the ancient routine of the man being the sole bread winner in the family, and the woman tending to the domestic and family needs.

Dictionary.com defined a family as a basic social unit consisting of parents and their children, considered as a group, whether dwelling or not. Because of how important a family is, catering for each of its members' need depends on the ability to provide the basic necessities of life which is sustained by the ability for the older ones to work and earn a living. Thus, earning a living in this context entails working.

Business dictionary defined work as a job or something done to earn money. However, combining the role of a married family man or woman effectively with being an employee in a university remains unattainable without the law.

Generally, workers come to organizations with expectations of their personal needs to be met by the organizations but not to the detriment of their family responsibilities.

Thus, it is important to look for avenues which are legal ways the law can help balance family-work life of married employees in Universities in Rivers State. This is essential because its end results in high level of efficiency and effectiveness both at work and at home.

In work domains, the absence of family- work balance causes poor performance and more absenteeism of employees (Frone, Russel, & Copper,. 1997). Also, a balanced family-work life is associated with increased job satisfaction and organizational commitment (Wayne, Koch & Hill, 2004).

Family-work balance is a concept which includes the proper prioritization between work (Career and ambition) and lifestyle (health, pleasure, leisure, family) (Benson, 2005). In a tertiary institution, this can be achieved by universities having to develop appropriate laws and practical responses that meet the specific needs of the universities and its consistency, and also valuing employees for their contribution.

There are workplace laws that can aid family-work balance such as paid -off leave which enables the married employee take time off work in order to take care of sick children or immediate family members (Singley, 2005). Provision can also be made by Universities to handle medical bills of its employees as this motivates the employees to put in more effort at work because health they say, is wealth. One of the best ways of ensuring balance between work and family is by the use of family-friendly workplace policies and practices which include granting casual leaves to employees to deal with pressing domestic issues and making sure that the employee is kept up-to-date about what is going on in the workplace, including any changes that might occur.

Various states and federal anti-discrimination laws prohibit discrimination on the basis of marital status, sex, pregnancy, and family or career responsibilities. (Job Creation and Protection Bill, 2013). It should also be acknowledged that employees have important roles and responsibilities outside the work place. Since women assume more family care responsibilities than men, family-work balance also perpetuate gender inequalities. During the early years of a child's life, women in particular seek to reduce the amount of time devoted to paid work. However, periods out of work or in part time work may reduce a woman's long term job security.

This leads to the need for a law that allows few hours to work for a period of one year after the end of maternity leave. On the other hand, married male employees in universities in Rivers State may be seen working longer hours once the children arrive in order to cater for the new addition. It is perceived that the married men and married women may have different views on family-work balance laws (Ron, 2013). Thus, there is the need for paternity leave to be introduced for gender balance. Nevertheless, the state of family-work balance in the universities in Rivers State is to an extent backed up by the Nigerian labour Act (1974) where

daily hours of work are fixed by collective bargaining (section 13:1), and if the day's work is longer than 6 hours, provision for rest intervals of no less than one hour in total is granted (section 13:3). A worker is entitled to an annual leave of at least six working days that may be defined by more than twelve months (section 18). Nursing women are also entitled to twelve weeks maternity leave. However, many workers in the Universities are not protected by existing legal or regulatory framework. A family work-life that is balanced in universities in Rivers State by law will definitely yield an increase in effective manpower and economic development. Balancing family-work life is also important because both family and work are symbiotic in terms of the effect they have on each other.

In a bid to ascertain if the law influences a healthy family-work life, this study investigates the law and family-work balance of married employees in Universities in Rivers State.

Statement of the Problem

There has been a high increase in the demand to get a job done in tertiary institutions recently. This is due to the increase in the number of students that need to be attended to compared to years ago when universities were not as populated (with students) as they are presently. Advances in information technology, information load, the need for speedy response, importance attached to the quality of student service and its implication for constant availability and the pace of change all demand more time and can be sources of pressure.

Unfortunately, in Universities in Rivers State, emphasis is not placed on married employees' balance between family and work, and the effect it has on the employees' stability which in turn affects the input which also affects the output in the tertiary institution as there is no balance. The reverse can only be the case if a law backing family and work balance is established because a well sorted out family life tends to reflect on one's performance in an educational institution, and this yields productivity. Most times, for there to be a balance between family and work-life of married employees, the law has to come into play so that when employers tend to do otherwise, the employees' right wouldn't be trampled on. In the absence of the law and family work balance of married employees in universities in Rivers State, chaos, less productivity, and lack of zeal to perform one's work will be on the increase.

Aim and Objectives of the Study

The aim of the study was to investigate the law and family-work balance of married employees in Universities in Rivers State.

Specifically, the objectives of the study included to;

1. Examine the state of family work balance of married employees in Universities in Rivers State.
2. Find out the ways the law can enhance family-work balance

Research Questions:

1. What is the state of family-work balance of married employees in Universities in Rivers State?
2. What are the ways the law can enhance family-work balance?

Hypotheses

1. There is no significant difference between the mean scores of married male and female employees on their family-work balance in universities in Rivers State.
2. There is no significant difference between the mean scores rating of male and female married employees in Universities in Rivers State on the ways the law can enhance family-work balance.

Methodology

The study adopted a descriptive survey design with a population of 8967 married employees from the three Universities in Rivers State (both academic and non academic employees). The sample size was determined using Taro Yamen's Sample cited in Kpee (2015). The Taro Yamen assumes a significant level of error of 0.05 and a confidence level of 95%.

Using stratified random sampling method, 383 respondents were selected. However, out of the 383 copies of questionnaire that were hand distributed, 345 (204 males and 141 females) were retrieved reflecting 93% return rate. The instrument used for collection of data for this research was a questionnaire titled "Law and Family-Work Balance of Married Employees Questionnaire" (LFWBMEQ), and was validated by experts from the Department of Educational Management, University of Port Harcourt. Cronbach Alpha method was used to estimate the reliability of the instrument and this yielded an index of 0.75. The reliability estimate was considered appropriate in terms of internal consistency of the instrument. The research questions were answered using the mean and standard deviation while z-test was used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. Means above 2.50 were interpreted as agreed while those below 2.50 were interpreted as disagreed.

Results

Research Question One:

What is the state of family-work balance of married employees in Universities in Rivers State?

Table 1: Analysis of the mean scores of male and female married employees on the state of family-work balance in Universities in Rivers State. (Criterion mean: 2.50)

S/N	Items	Male (204)		Female (141)		Decision
		\bar{X}	SD	\bar{X}	SD	
1	Family role is effectively fulfilled after a long and demanding day at work.	3.39	0.49	3.54	0.49	Agreed
2	There is provision for co-workers to fill in for each other when a family issue/situation arises.	2.56	1.02	3.51	0.51	Agreed
3	Things I want to do at home are not affected by the demand my job puts on me.	3.40	0.49	3.33	0.76	Agreed
4	My involvement in my family helps me expand my knowledge and this helps me be a better worker	3.46	0.64	3.07	0.80	Agreed
5	Family related stress affects my ability to perform job related duties	3.47	0.52	3.14	0.83	Agreed
Grand Mean		3.26		3.32		

Table 1 reveals that both male and female married employees agreed that in the universities where they work in Rivers State, the state of family-work balance is one in which after a long

and demanding day at work, family role is still effectively fulfilled; when a family issue/situation arises, their co-workers fill in for them; family involvement expands the employees' knowledge even at work; the demand of the job still makes the married employees do what they want to do at home but once there is a family-related stress, their ability to perform their job related duties is affected.

Research Questions Two:

What are the ways the law can enhance family-work balance?

Table 2: Analysis of the mean score on the ways the law can enhance family-work balance (Criterion mean: 2.50).

S/N	Items	Male (204)		Female (141)		Decision
		\bar{X}	SD	\bar{X}	SD	
6	Provision for handling medical bills by my university makes me put in more effort at work.	3.51	0.50	3.51	0.50	Agreed
7	Paid time off policy for taking care of sick children exists in my work place.	3.07	0.80	3.30	0.46	Agreed
8	At the end of maternity leave nursing mothers should be given few hours to work for a period of one year and still get fully paid	2.53	0.57	2.65	0.55	Agreed
9	Casual leave is granted to employees to deal with pressing domestic issues.	2.02	0.63	2.09	0.64	Disagreed
10	Paternity leave should be granted to husbands of nursing mothers at the first week of child's birth	2.89	0.95	3.42	0.49	Agreed
Grand Mean		2.80		2.99		

Table 2 reveals that both male and female married employees in Universities in Rivers State agreed that for family-work balance to be enhanced, there should be a law in the universities that makes provision for the university to handle medical bills of its employees; existence of paid time-off policy for taking care of sick children should be introduced; nursing mothers should work fewer hours for a period of one year; casual leave should be granted to employees to deal with pressing domestic issues and there should also be a law that grants paternity leave to husbands of nursing mothers at the first week of child's birth.

Hypothesis One

There is no significant difference between the mean scores rating of married male and female employees on their family-work balance male and female married employees in Rivers State Universities.

Table 3: z-test analysis of the difference between the mean scores rating of family-work balance of male and female married employees in Rivers State universities.

Subject	N	\bar{X}	SD	z-cal	z-crit	Level of sig.	Df	Remark
Married Male	204	3.26	0.63	0.85	± 1.96	0.05	343	Ho ₁ is Accepted
Married Female	141	.32	0.68					

Table 3 showed that the z-calculated value of 0.85 is less than the z-critical value of 1.96 at degree of freedom of 343 at 0.05 level of significance. We therefore accept the null

hypothesis and uphold that: there is no significant difference between the mean scores rating of family-work balance of male and female married employees in Rivers State Universities.

Hypothesis Two:

There is no significant deference between the mean scores rating of male and female married in university employees in River State on the ways the law can enhance family-work balance.

Table 3: z-test Analysis of the difference between the mean scores rating of male and female married employees in universities in Rivers State on the ways the law can enhance family-work balance.

Subject	N	\bar{X}	SD	z-cal	z-crit	Level of sig.	Df	Remark
Married Male	204	2.80	0.69	3.17	± 1.96	0.05	343	Ho ₂ is rejected
Married Female	141	2.99	0.53					

Table 4 showed that the z-calculated value of 3.17 is greater than the z-critical value of 1.96 at degree of freedom of 343 at 0.05 level of significance. The null hypothesis was therefore rejected. Therefore, there is a significant difference between the mean ratings of male and female married employees in universities in Rivers state on the ways the law can enhance family-work balance.

Discussion of findings

The findings of this study revealed that the state of family-work balance of married employees in universities in Rivers state is one in which family role is still effectively fulfilled even after a long and demanding day at work. Coworkers Fill in for each other when a family issue/situation arises, and the demands of the job do not affect things to be done at home. Involvement in family helps expand their knowledge and thus helps them to be better workers although family related stress affects the ability to perform work related duties. These results show proper priority that is given to family and work and are in line with the submission of Benson (2005). The results in table two also agree with Singley (2005) that work place laws can aid family-work balance.

On the test of hypothesis 1, the findings show no significant difference between male and female married employees as they both share the same view on the state of family-work balance that exists in universities in Rivers State. For hypothesis 2, the findings show a significant difference between male and female married employees in universities in Rivers state on the ways the law can enhance family-work balance. The reason for the significant difference could be that the married male employees and married female employees have divergent and not the same views on family-work balance laws as corroborated by Ron (2013).

Conclusion

In view of the findings of this study, it is concluded that the state of family-work balance should be included in the strategic plans of universities in Rivers State as it aids the universities gain competitive edge through being able to attract and retain employees with great skills and experience. This can also be attained by the universities implementing family-work laws that provide greater flexibility to all married employees, and also ensure flexible

working hours schedules and leave arrangements to accommodate their family responsibilities without detriment. Although there was significantly difference between the mean ratings of the married male and female employees on the ways the law can enhance family-work balance, the research has been able to achieve its objectives. Thus, if one has managed to apportion the essential time for every facet of life duly and not reflect on the problems in one part of life, it means that he has been able to achieve family-work balance (Aycan, Eskin & Yavuz, 2007).

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following are hereby recommended:

1. Universities should formulate creative means to communicate written formal and informal family-work practices and laws.
2. Paternity leave for fathers at a time of child's birth should be considered.
3. Universities should consider ways to collaborate with government about the family-work problems and possible solutions.
4. Prior to a married employee resigning from the university, questions like if the difficulties of balancing family-work responsibilities was the reason for the resignation should be asked.

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